

### **REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Reconsideration and allowance in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 5-9 remain pending. Claims 10-14 were withdrawn from further consideration. Those claims have been canceled, without prejudice, to advance prosecution. Claim 1 has been revised above to incorporate the limitations of previously presented dependent claim 4 and claims 2-4 have been canceled.

Claims 1-9 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The claims have been reviewed and revised bearing in mind the Examiner's rejection and suggested revised language. It is believed that all claims are now in full compliance with 35 USC 112, and it is therefore respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-9 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over Minobe et al in view of Goranson. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 1 has been amended above to be more specifically directed to the embodiment wherein a substantially planar reflector is mounted at a right angle to the direction of conveyance at the forward or rearward end portion of the some of the rests and no reflector is mounted to the other rests, and further wherein each of the microwave generators are controlled to change the output thereof in accordance with the quantity of the ceramic molded articles existing in the respective drying areas formed between adjacent ones of the reflectors in the drying bath.

Minobe discloses a microwave continuous heating apparatus comprising a heating compartment 11, a plurality of microwave generators 12, a conveyor belt 17, a plurality of jigs 23 (rests) on which an object is placed, and reflecting plates 22. However, in Minobe, the reflecting plates are provided on all of the jigs. Thus, Minobe teaches away from the claimed invention. Indeed, in accordance with the invention

recited in claim 1, there are some rests that have a reflector and the remaining rests do not have a reflector. Minobe does not teach or suggest the concept of reflectors placed on only some rests so as to divide the conveyed objects into various drying areas in the drying bath. For the same reasons, Minobe does not teach or suggest controlling the microwave generators in accordance with the quantity of articles existing in the respective drying area between respective reflectors.

The Examiner seeks to overcome the deficiencies of Minobe by relying upon the reference to Goranson. However, Goranson does not overcome the deficiencies of Minobe with respect to the invention claimed. In this regard, Goranson discloses a continuous microwave heating oven with a chamber, conveyor, and a sensing system with a plurality of sensors for detecting the distribution of products being heated to control the power output of the microwave generator. However, Goranson does not disclose the idea of a reflector placed on one or some of the rests while others of the rests have no reflector, and wherein the conveyed products are thus divided into predetermined drying areas. Likewise, Goranson does not teach or suggest controlling the output of the microwave generators in accordance with the quantity of articles existing in each drying area between respective reflectors. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the invention of applicant's claim 1 is not anticipated by nor obvious from Minobe taken alone or in combination with Goranson

Claims 1, 2 and 9 were rejected under 35 USC 103 as obvious over Guerga et al in view of Goranson. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

However, to advance prosecution, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of dependent claim 4 so that this rejection has been mooted.

Original claim 3 was rejected under 35 USC 103 as unpatentable over Guerga et al in view of Goranson and further in view of Warmbier. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. However, this rejection has also been mooted by the amendment to claim 1 presented above.

Claim 4 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Guerga et al in view of Goranson and further in view of Britton. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

As the Examiner notes, neither Guerga nor Goranson discloses the use of reflectors arranged between articles being microwave heated. The Examiner therefore recites the tertiary reference to Britton as allegedly teaching the provision of reflectors. However, as acknowledged by the Examiner, Britton teaches only providing reflectors between (all) objects being conveyed. Thus, Britton does not teach or suggest the provision of a reflector on one or some rests while other rests have no reflector. Thus, the apparatus claimed by applicant, wherein a reflector is provided on only one or only some of the rests is not taught or suggested by the Examiner's proposed combination. Furthermore, although Goranson disclose a plurality of sensors for detecting a distribution of the products, there is no teaching or suggestion in Goranson or the remaining art of record for controlling the output of the microwave generators in accordance with the articles existing in each drying area between respective reflectors. It is therefore respectfully submitted that even if the prior art could be combined in the manner suggested by the Examiner, the invention claimed would still not be anticipated nor obvious.

Claims 5-8 were rejected under 35 USC 103 as unpatentable over Guerga et al in view of Goranson and further in view of Coch. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

However, the Examiner's rejection has been mooted by the amendment to claim 1 presented above.

All objections and rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

ISHIKAWA et al.  
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Respectfully submitted,

**NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.**

By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle N. Lester", written over a horizontal line.

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